

## **For Immediate Release**

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Release Date: 7/9/2020



## **Center for Victims Announces New Board of Directors**

Pittsburgh – July 9, 2020 – On July 1, 2020, with the future in sight, CV conducted a Reorganization Meeting to approve our strategic vision, new bylaws, a new Board of Directors and officers. Directors were appointed based on their knowledge of and contributions to our justice system as well as other identified needs of the new strategic vision.

Center for Victims is pleased to introduce our new Board of Directors:

### **Professor John Rago, Esq.- Chair**

Professor Rago is an Adjunct Professor of Criminal Law at Duquesne University. He is appointed to the Pennsylvania Sentencing Commission, a member of the Pennsylvania Bar Institute's (PBI) Suggested Standard Criminal Jury Instructions Committee and serves as special counsel to the Allegheny County Criminal Justice Advisory Board. Professor Rago has been instrumental in assuring the voice of victim advocates are brought to the decision-making tables and assuring victims are afforded their rights and their voices are heard.

### **The Honorable Linda L. Kelly, Esq. – Vice Chair**

Linda Kelly began her career as Allegheny County Assistant District Attorney. She then spent 30 years as a federal prosecutor and senior litigation counsel with the U.S. Attorney's Western Pennsylvania Office in Pittsburgh and twice served as acting U.S. Attorney. After the September 11 attacks, she worked as the anti-terrorism coordinator for the U.S. Attorney, serving both as senior litigation counsel and anti-terrorism liaison. Linda was then appointed Attorney General of Pennsylvania, only the second woman to ever serve in this position. She led the Attorney General's office in prosecuting former Penn State football coach Jerry Sandusky on 48 counts of sex abuse. In 2011, the jury convicted Sandusky of 25 felonies and 20 misdemeanors.

### **Benjamin Saks – Treasurer**

Ben Saks is a graduate of the Carnegie Mellon School of Architecture. As a student, he saw a police officer pursuing a drug dealer on a city street. The police officer was struggling with the assailant and Ben asked the officer if he needed help and stepped in. The drug dealer grabbed the officer's weapon and fired. Ben was shot in the hand. For his heroic efforts, Ben was awarded the Bronze Medal by the Carnegie Hero Fund

Commission. A national award, the medal is given to those who risk their lives to an extraordinary degree to save and attempt to save the lives of others.

Ben has worked in design and architecture as an artist and adjunct professor of architecture at CMU. Employing his many skills, he launched his own successful business KerfCase. As a filmmaker and longtime friend of Center for Victims, Ben produced a short film, "Life After" in conjunction with CV staff. The film explores the lives of three survivors of violent crime and was narrated by Martin Sheen.

**Maryssa McGuire, M.Ed., CAGS, NCSP - Secretary**

Maryssa is the Director of Psychological and Student Services at the Pittsburgh Environmental School. ECS combines the academic rigor of the best public schools with a multi-disciplinary, "out-the-door" learning approach rooted in real world problems that build active, engaged, and empathetic citizens. ECS is closely aligned with the tenets of CV. Newer to board service, Maryssa brings a fresh perspective and first-hand experience with the struggles of our youth and families in our communities.

Additional newly seated directors include:

**The Honorable Governor Tom Corbett, Esq.**

**Bruce Antkowiak, Esq.** St. Vincent College Professor and Constitutional Law Scholar

**Gay M. Fogarty, Ph.D.** CEO, The Fogarty Group

**Devin L. Patterson, MSCP, LPC, NCC** Certified Trauma Therapist, Counselor, Allegheny County Community College, member Omega Psi Phi

**Joseph Asturi** Allegheny County Court Administration

**The Honorable District Attorney Stephen A. Zappala**, Ex Officio

**Laurie Z. MacDonald**, President/CEO, Ex Officio

As we turn the page in our history book, our intent is to provide the highest levels of safety and well-being for crime victims. This means utilizing technology, accessing and implementing changes to our justice system to ensure readily available access and equity for all victims in Pennsylvania. Utilizing the best research, we seek to educate our allied partners, communities and schools about the impact and signs of trauma.

Through our "Healing Rivers Project" we seek to help those communities and victims impacted by crime to heal, understand and find peace.

Center for Victims is the most comprehensive provider of services, advocacy and education for victims and witnesses of crime and violence and their families in Allegheny County and in Pennsylvania. [www.centerforvictims.org](http://www.centerforvictims.org)